



***The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann*, T. David Beck, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2010, pp. viii, 269, ISBN 978-0227173329. £23.00**

This book on pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann is the paperback version of a thesis completed at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and first published in the United States in 2007. The author is now a pastor at a Foursquare Pentecostal church in California. Traditionally, the Pentecostal movement has not been particularly worried about dogmatic theology, and so it is to his credit that T. David Beck is here attempting to speak theologically about the person and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, Beck begins with the controversy over the *filioque* clause, and aligns himself from the start with the Eastern position, contending that the Spirit should be described as proceeding from the Father alone, and not from the Father and the Son. His argument is that because of the *filioque* clause, the Spirit has been ‘overshadowed by the pre-eminent figure of the Son’ (1), with the result that Western Christianity, and Protestantism in particular, has traditionally neglected the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, Beck’s concern is to separate pneumatology from Christology, and to consider the work of the Spirit in its own right.

Before Protestant theologians can leap to their own defence, Beck proceeds to outline what he perceives as the two dominant accounts of pneumatology in Western theology. The first is what he terms an ‘institutional pneumatology’ (2), where the work of the Holy Spirit is primarily identified with Word and Sacrament, as administered by the Church and as centred on Jesus Christ. His representative theologian here is Karl Barth, but he attributes this tendency to all the institutional churches of the Reformation. The second dominant account is ‘experiential pneumatology’ (7), as espoused by Anabaptists, Pietists, Methodists, and Pentecostals. Here, his representative is John Wesley, whom Beck reads as largely confining the work of the Holy Spirit to the sanctification of the individual believer. While both these accounts carry important truths, neither of them are fully adequate to Beck’s mind. His solution is to return to Scripture in order to read afresh the



‘original language of pneumatology’; and the result is his discovery of a ‘third option’ (2): what he terms ‘eschatological pneumatology’.

This ‘return’ to the purity of Scripture is a predictably necessary step for Beck, who laments what he sees as a disconnect between biblical and systematic theology, at least when it comes to pneumatology. He concedes that there are three major New Testament pneumatologies – Lukan, Johannine, and Pauline – but selects Paul as providing ‘the broadest conception of the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual Christian and in the Christian community’ (23). Paul’s pneumatology, Beck contends, embodies an eschatological perspective, in which the reign of God is both ‘now’ and ‘not yet’, so that the Holy Spirit represents ‘both fulfillment and promise’ (32).

I would have to say at this point that I am unconvinced by how Beck has set up his typology. The appeal to Scripture means that this ‘third option’ is in fact chronologically and authoritatively the first option, so that the supposedly dominant ‘institutional’ and ‘experiential’ pneumatologies are *ipso facto* later distortions of a purer biblical account. Moreover, I am equally unconvinced that every Protestant church in history falls straightforwardly into one or other of the two options. Beck spends little time on either of his representatives, Barth and Wesley, so that his reading of them comes across as shallow to the point of misrepresentation. Besides, is ‘eschatological pneumatology’, in which ‘the new age has been inaugurated but not yet consummated’ (82), really such a new insight? It strikes me that this has been a staple of mainstream theology for centuries.

Indeed, this love of typological categorisation is a weakness of the book as a whole. To an extent, Beck is to be commended for his attention to the definition of his terms; the overall effect, however, rapidly becomes tedious. For example, within a few pages we are treated to a discussion of ‘four main themes’ (29) of Old Testament prophecy, followed by ‘a pair of indicators’ of hope (32), followed by ‘three metaphors’ (34) used by Paul, the first of which has ‘three basic meanings’, and the first of which basic meanings yields ‘four points’ (35). It all reads as rather too neat a systematisation of the far-from-systematic theology of Paul.

A related problem is that Beck, while an educated and intelligent reader of biblical scholarship, is himself no biblical scholar. He does

succeed in gathering together and summarising clearly a fair range of scholarship on the matter. However, at no point are we given a detailed exegesis of any one passage of Paul. Instead, Beck's method is akin to that of a thematic preacher, dropping in and out of various of Paul's letters to pick out the verses which back up his argument. In particular, he relies heavily on just one work, by the New Testament scholar Gordon D. Fee (*God's Empowering Presence*, 1994), to the point that I wondered if I would be better reading Fee myself. Moreover, no considered attention is given to any opposing interpretation. And finally, despite Beck's love of categorisation, there is no index of scriptural references, frustrating what might potentially have been a useful preacher's aid in the run-up to Pentecost and Trinity Sunday.

So much for the first half of this book. However, matters improve considerably when, in an ambitious move, Beck leaps to the twentieth century with his consideration of Moltmann's pneumatology. Admittedly, it is a slightly bizarre project which ignores the 2000 years between them and sets side-by-side on an ahistorical plane the theologies of Paul and Moltmann.

However, according to Beck's assessment, Moltmann is the modern theologian who has come closest to the Pauline paradigm. At this point he treats us to a useful overview of Moltmann's main works of theology and the developments in his eschatological thought. This book would have been far more successful had this been Beck's primary focus; however, Beck reads Moltmann as inconsistent in his account of the role of the Holy Spirit in this eschatological vision, and so had clearly felt the need to correct and supplement him in advance with the Pauline perspective.

What is most original in this book is Beck's Protestant re-reading of the Holy Spirit in Paul as consistent with the Eastern rejection of the *filioque* clause. Consistent with the Eastern position, Beck treats the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God, and not of Christ. The *filioque* is something of an East-West ecumenical hot potato, and it is a valuable exercise for Protestants – always slightly removed from the debate – to consider the issue according to the biblical witness. In particular, Beck's Pentecostal perspective is to be welcomed.

However, having outlawed Christ (if only for the sake of the discussion), and having disallowed also both Church *and* experience, Beck then struggles to talk about the Spirit in any concrete way at

all. Ultimately, I was left unsure about what practical difference an eschatological pneumatology might make, and found myself longing for some good old-fashioned Barthian christocentrism. This book may indeed prove to be very relevant to the debate over the *filioque* clause. But the final irony is that Beck has convinced me to keep it.

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***Political Engagement as Biblical Mandate*, Paul Hanson,
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The Harvard Divinity School scholar, Paul Hanson, enters a new terrain by writing *Political Engagement as Biblical Mandate*. Best known for his work on Old Testament studies, he now ventures into the modern debate about the relation between religion and politics.

In his introduction, Hanson describes the pervasive modern demand that religion should be checked at the door in public discourse, and expresses worries about the effects of this attitude. This is not to say that he does not recognize the importance of the typical Rawlsian argument which sustains it. He sees the strength of the arguments of liberal political theory, which stresses individual independence and responsibility, and has no desire to side with ‘communitarianism’ in as an opposite strategy. Rather, Hanson hopes to draw out the strengths of both positions, and so attempt to forge ‘a strategy that strikes the delicate balance between confessional integrity and civility’ (35). Hanson states the intention of the book to be twofold: firstly, to argue ‘that religiously informed thought has played and can continue to play a constructive role in the public forum’ (viii); and secondly, to ‘clarify what style of religious argument benefits the common good, respects all religious and moral perspectives, conforms to the laws of host regimes, and produces global accord’ (ibid.). Naturally, his book takes a deliberately U.S.-centred focus, and so works mostly with examples,